

Web Blog SunWalk2008 engl. XXIII

7/17 – 8/3/2008

Philadelphia, PA – New York City, NY

7/17 – 7/21/2008

Philadelphia, PA – Newark, NJ

Saul Berger tried last year to bring our solar boat sun21 to Philadelphia. When we didn't make it there because of lack of time Saul visited us at the Atlantic coast. Now I meet this solar expert again. Together we visit the „Friends Center“ in downtown Philadelphia.

In Wikipedia we read about the Quakers:

“The “Religious Society of Friends, whose members are known as Quakers or Friends, was founded in [England](#) in the 17th century as a [Christian religious denomination](#) by people who were dissatisfied with the existing [denominations](#) and [sects](#) of [Christianity](#). Historians generally credit [George Fox](#) with being the principal co-founder or most important early leader. The Society of Friends is counted among the historic [peace churches](#).

Since its beginnings in the [United Kingdom](#), Quakerism has spread to other countries, chiefly [Australia](#), [Bolivia](#), [Costa Rica](#), [Ireland](#), [Kenya](#) and the [United States](#). Although the total number of Quakers is relatively small, approximately 350,000 worldwide, there are places, such as [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania](#); [Newberg, Oregon](#); [Greenleaf, Idaho](#); [Whittier, California](#); [Richmond, Indiana](#); [Friendswood, Texas](#); [Birmingham, UK](#); and [Greensboro, North Carolina](#) in which Quaker influence is concentrated.

Unlike many other groups that emerged within Christianity, the Religious Society of Friends has tended away from [creeds](#), and in modern times away from hierarchical structure.^[3]

The various branches have widely divergent beliefs and practices, but the central concept to many Friends is the "[Inner Light](#)". Accordingly, individual Quakers may develop individual religious beliefs arising from their personal conscience and revelation coming from "God within"; further, Quakers feel compelled to live by such individual religious beliefs and inner revelations.

Many Quakers feel their faith does not fit within traditional Christian categories of [Catholic](#), [Orthodox](#) or [Protestant](#), but is an expression of another way of experiencing God.

The Religious Society of Friends began in England in 1648, as a [Nonconformist](#) breakaway movement from English [Puritanism](#). As the movement expanded, it faced opposition and persecution. Friends were imprisoned and beaten in both Great Britain, Ireland and the British colonies. William Penn was imprisoned in England on a number of occasions. In the 1670 "Hay-market case", William Penn was accused of the crime of 'preaching Quakerism to an unlawful assembly', and while he freely admitted his guilt he challenged the righteousness of such a law. The jury, recognizing that William Penn clearly had been preaching in public, but refusing to find him guilty of speaking to an unlawful assembly, attempted to find Penn guilty of "speaking in Gracechurch-street". The judge, unsatisfied with this decision, withheld food, water, and toilet facilities from the jurors for three days. The jurors finally decided to return a not guilty verdict overall, and while the decision was accepted, the jurors were fined. One of the jurors appealed this fine, and Chief Justice Sir John Vaughn issued an historically-important ruling: that jurors could not be punished for their verdicts. This case is considered significant milestone in the history of [jury nullification](#). [25]

In the [Massachusetts Bay colony](#), Friends were banished on pain of death - some (most famously [Mary Dyer](#)) were hanged on [Boston Common](#) for returning to preach their beliefs. In England Friends were effectively banned from sitting in [Parliament](#) at [Westminster](#) from 1698-1833. The Commonwealth of [Pennsylvania](#) was founded by [William Penn](#), as a safe place for Friends to live and practice their faith. Despite persecution, the movement grew steadily.

Quaker [testimonies](#) are an expression of "spirituality in action". [28] They can be regarded as the traditional statements of Quaker belief, though Quakers avoid [creeds](#). The Testimonies are not a formal, static set of words, but rather a shared view of how many Quakers relate to God and the world. This leads to each Quaker having a different understanding of what the testimonies are, and while the ideologies remain quite similar for all Quakers, they go by different names, and different values are included throughout the Religious Society of Friends. The Testimonies are interrelated and can be seen as a coherent philosophical system, even outside Christian theology. The testimonies have not always been consistent, but throughout their history they have challenged Friends and provided them guidance.

The list of testimonies is, like all aspects of Friends theology, continuously evolving - so as to be relevant to today, but the following are common:

- [Peace](#)
- [Equality](#)
- [Integrity](#) (or sometimes Truth)
- [Simplicity](#).”

Lucretia Mott, crusader for abolition of slavery and for the rights of women, was part of the women's meeting that called for the construction of a meetinghouse in 1855. In 1856 it was inaugurated – it became a center for peace, women rights and abolition of slavery.

Today the „Friends Center“ is a big construction site. The whole building complex will become carbon free – the motto is: „Turning Quaker Gray into Quaker Green – An Environmental Witness for Peace, Integrity, Equality, Simplicity.“ The buildings will become highly energy-efficient. Geothermal installations will provide heat and cooling. A photovoltaic solar power plant will provide electricity. There will be a vegetated roof, stormwater capture and reuse for the toilets. High recycled or rapidly renewable materials and low emission paints are used. Construction waste will be recycled. We meet with the team of architect, engineer, energy experts, and quaker people. We are witnessing their enthusiasm – being able to create such a comprehensive and exemplary project for sustainability.

The big old assembly hall reflects also „equality“. The benches are arranged in a non-hierarchical way.

Leaving Philadelphia on highway number 1 I can feel the proximity of the huge city - I am getting closer and closer to New York City. I am constantly surrounded by the busy traffic flow. A detour to the picturesque little town of Bristol at the Delaware River gives me a welcome break. There is a sharp temperature drop between Main Street and the porch of the King George II inn – outside I am hot from excessive heat, sweating, inside I am dried out. Entering the restaurant is like entering a big refrigerator. I enjoy a salad and fill my glass again and again with ice water. There is a wonderful view into a park at the river bench of the Delaware River. A black boy is climbing onto the back of a wooden play horse. A little white girl follows him, then another one. At the end an American-Chinese completes the riding crew. They pet the horse, they stroke it. They try hard to get it into motion; but it stays there, motionless, stoically. After a while this rider quartett loses its interest and dismounts the horse looking for a new fun source.

I meet Claudio Beretta, 23, in Newark, NJ. He joins me for the last stretch of my walk. I met his grand parents already in the sixties, in Maisprach, a village in the countryside east of Basel. A friend of mine, Marina Koellreuter, lives in the Beretta house. She works as a primary school teacher in Maisprach. We met through the music – we play chamber music together. She asks me whether I can come to her class as “Santa Claus”. Later I get to know Kurt Beretta in the out patient clinic of the Basel Kantonsspital. He works there as a medical student, and I am his tutor. We become friends. Among other things I admire his skills in playing the accordion. Today Kurt works in Rheinfelden as an oncologist. Jacqueline Becker and Kurt get married. Claudio is their son – one of the young people among my friends who strengthen my faith into the future. He is studying environmental sciences at the ETH Zuerich (“Swiss MIT”). His patience, his sensitivity, his awe and enthusiasm about nature and his independence make him an ideal hiking companion. He joined me already during my hike to Jerusalem in 2003 and walked with me for some days in Austria. Now Claudio joins me in Newark, NJ, after a internship in Tucson, AZ.

We cross two bridges on a very narrow sidewalk – there is just enough room for James – it’s like hell: One huge truck after the other passes us roaring. There is much dust in the air. The bridges are trembling. Suddenly Manhattan appears in front of us. We arrive at the waterside of the Hudson River, exactly across North Cove Harbor where we landed with the solar boat sun21 on May 8th 2007. South of us we see the Statue of Liberty, above the domes of a church.

We look for a hotel for the night – all are sold out. Edy Vicente, the front desk Supervisor of the Homewood Hilton in Edgewater feels sorry for us. She calls all the hotels in the neighborhood, but there are no rooms available. Afterwards gives us a tour around the hotel looking for a camping site. The next lot is fenced, and it smells chemicals. The area seems to be polluted with toxic chemicals. Therefore we decide to walk another 5 to 6 hours, all the way to Manhattan. Darelyn Olsen, our host, expects us for the next evening; but she just returned from Europe and agrees that we come already that night. Edy fills a bag with apple, oranges, and peaches. She gives us also leftovers from a party – pasta and salad. Soon we are sitting in a small park at the waterfront and eating small apples preparing for our night hike to the Big Apple.

Shortly after 11 PM we arrive at the George Washington Bridge. The bridge is open for pedestrians until midnight – it’s an overwhelming experience to walk into Manhattan, the glittering jewelry on midnight blue velvet. It’s almost never ending, the walk from 178th to 66th street. Fortunately there is less and less traffic. A fresh breeze from the Atlantic is caressing us. After a while the dark trees of the Central Park appear. Finally, shortly after 2 AM, we arrive at 1 E. 66th Street where we can stay in a beautiful small guest apartment at the best location next to the Central Park. Darelyn Olsen, a friend of my friend Virginia Holmquist in Monrovia, has offered us this great place for the time of our N.Y. stay. A doorman welcomes us, one of around 15 doormen who find a way of making a living between the glass door at the main entrance and the apartments – men from Romania, from Hungary, from the Ukraine, Ecuador, France, Ireland, who found here an new home. Big Apple – where the whole world meets.

7/23 – 8/3/2008

New York City

The days in New York City – a mosaic composed out of plenty of colorful pieces.

The Central Park calls us – again and again – the big oasis in the stone and brick desert, the island in the sea of houses and skyscrapers. We are sitting on the lawn, next to the lake. It’s dusk, the blue hour. Bats are swirling around our heads and catch mosquitoes and flies that are delighted about our naked legs. Glow worms surprise us as green blinkers, in the lawn, in the air, in the bushes. A shrew-mouse is flitting along looking for breadcrumbs. And the air is resonating from cicadas.

We buy some organic picnic in the wonderful Whole Foods store at the Columbus Circle and meet in the park – with Johanna Kopp, a multitalented musician with Swiss roots, a friend of my friend Madeleine Kamber; with Sibilla Marelli from Rodersdorf. This friend just has finished a pottery workshop in Maine. What a joy to be in N. Y. C. at the same time and to catch up with all the Swiss news and stories. We go together to a Mozart and Webern concerto at the Lincoln Center with the conductor Louis Langree. The soprano singer Christiane Oelze sings an aria from Mozart's Idomeneo and Webern songs, with perfection, with a concentration, and a presence that the ear and the mind don't miss a single note.

The divine melodies of the Prague Symphony encourage me. If there are people in our species who can compose and play such wonderful music, it will also be possible to keep our unique planet inhabitable. It cannot be that we are so stupid, lazy, greedy, and unimaginative that we sacrifice our life conditions to some short-term particular interests. Some years ago a Soviet icebreaker captain lured some whales out of the pack ice with loud Mozart music. In a similar way Mozart can lure us out into a bright future with 100 % renewable energy and energy efficiency.

Around noontime the David Ashkenazy trio teeters splendid jazz music into the Park. The ear follows the masterly varied rhythms of the drums. It enjoys the big line that the saxophonist creates; and during the bass solo I go closer. I don't want to miss the low elephant virtuosity that the bass player displays in twanging the thick strings. David plays the drum. He wears a funny little hat.

For a while I follow a horse-drawn carriage. I walk beside the big dapplegrey horse. It's walking very slowly, regularly, relaxed. Tufts of hair are teetering onto the big hooves. Bulges of muscles undulate under the gray speckled fell. The soft horse nose snorts once in a while. With joy I inhale the strong horse smell. The sunlight is reflected by the shining dope of the coach and the mane.

My muscles are also undulating, thanks to the deep Rolfing massage. Nikki, the daughter of our host, kneads Claudio and me – what a bliss after a long walk. Each muscle can be felt. It rolls over the healing hands that know where to go and what to do. It's enjoyable to experience how relaxed the muscles are after such a challenge – compared to 8 to 13 hours on a treadmill at maximal walking speed for 7 months...

Rooftop party of the Swiss General Consulate – celebration of the Swiss National Day. What a mixture of people, raclette, Swiss fried sausages ("Bratwurst"), the sounds of glasses and of a music band. Denise, the moderator of the party, asks me some questions concerning the SunWalk. Johann Aeschlimann, former correspondent for the Basler Zeitung (Basel newspaper), now PR director of the Swiss UN mission, organizes a press conference at the General Consulate some days later.

One of the highlights of the trip is the concert in the C. Bechstein Piano Center organized by the clarinetist Neil Rynston of Vista Lirica. "Do you know the land where the lemon blossoms grow..." by Schubert, the text from Goethe's Wilhelm Meister. And I see again

the oranges glowing in the dark green leaves of an orchard in the outskirts of Los Angeles. I feel again the joy and the alleviation after six days of hiking through the huge Metropolitan area of L. A. when I reach the countryside in Redlands. When Emily Howard sings Schubert's "Shepherd on the Rock" with exultation, with her strong and beautiful soprano voice, I walk again through the awakening woods of Arkansas and Tennessee: "The spring wants to come – the spring my joy!" And I feel again the life juices swashing in me, together with those of the trees with their unfolding leafage. The Brahms Trio for violin, cello and piano Opus 8 with its abundance of elating and deeply touching melodies evokes so many inner images of the last months – the awesome color symphonies of the morning and evening sky, the vast plains with the wind that raves over them, eyes that stand the eye contact just a little bit longer than usual, the inventive course of fleeing animals, the tender unconcern of flapping swallowtail butterflies in the hot midday air, and the wild waters of the Mississippi River.

We visit with Mary Delbanco several times. I can also use her computer during the whole New York stay. Mary lives on the 29th floor, at the 68th Street, at the East Side. The view from her apartment is overwhelming: Next to her building there are some rows of lower houses, like a valley in the mountain landscape of Manhattan. Behind this house creek there are skyscrapers, higher and higher towards the south of the city. The Chrysler building with its elegant roof arches provides a picturesque contrast to the big shoe boxes of the adjacent towers. I've seen already several weather situations with Mary from there, e. g. thunderstorms: Dark, almost black clouds are chasing each other across the city and dance around the top floors of the tall skyscrapers. Lightnings flash through the street gulches. And soon the skyline can hardly be seen behind the thick rain wall that is moving through the town.

Before sunset the red giant ball mutes our senses and takes us away from the busy and bustling activity, the honking, and the anthill down there. Dusk makes the view magic – everything turns blue, sometimes purple in winter until the lights start to sparkle, one after the other, on the midnight blue velvet of New York, this mighty queen of the night. No wonder Mary sends me these words by Sri Chinmoy:

The rising sun
Blesses my mind
with joy.

The setting sun
blesses my heart
with Peace.

Mary's husband, Kurt Delbanco, died last November at the age of 98. New York is not the same anymore for me since he is in the other world. I met Kurt and Mary in the early eighties – Kurt was the father of Thomas Delbanco from the Beth Israel Hospital, one of my bosses at Harvard Medical School. Kurt was an excellent painter. In addition he worked as an art dealer. He had a close working relationship with Ernst Beyeler, the famous gallerist in Basel. That's why we met regularly in Basel too. "Martin, I am here.

Do I see you for breakfast tomorrow?" We met for breakfast at the Schweizerhof Hotel. We laughed a lot, and we saved the world together over the breakfast egg. Kurt was always full of new ideas. How can we promote the Tobin tax? Do you know a carpenter that could make wooden headrests in African style for me? New York – what can we do to make it the first solar city of the world?

Kurt's ancestors came from Venice. Later they lived in Hamburg. Kurt came then to England and from there to the USA. His humor connected English and German culture. "Martin, do you know the problem of air-conditioning? Is 'er' (he) conditioned, is she not conditioned. Is she conditioned is 'er' not conditioned..." Or: "Kommt Zeit, computer" - in analogy to the German pun "Kommt Zeit, kommt Rat" (with time advice will come). There were very wonderful timeless hours when we looked at his paintings in his studio. I felt his childlike inspiring enthusiasm to create beauty. And now we are sitting at the diner table with Mary. We eat her wonderful tabouli dish, on the table sets that Kurt has designed. Kurt's designer clocks are ticking on the wall. And from a picture Kurt is looking at us, with his elfish smile, and he is chuckling "Hummel, Hummel" as the people from Hamburg say...